No Tricks on the Roads for Halloween

## By April Phillips

The scariest thing about Halloween should be the ghosts and goblins laying waste to our supplies of chocolate bars and bubble gum, or the possibility of toilet paper festooning the branches of the elm tree in the front yard. Unfortunately, true carnage is a real threat on October 31<sup>st</sup>.

The Centers for Disease Control found that the number of deaths among pedestrians aged five to 14 is four times higher on Halloween than on any other evening of the year. *Four times* higher.

The U.S. Department of Transportation reports that these fatal collisions between kids and cars happen most frequently between 4 and 8 p.m., prime trick-or-treating time. Only 16 percent of these deaths occurred at intersections, indicating that most happened when kids darted out into the street in the middle of a block, where drivers are least likely to be on the lookout for pedestrians.

Excited trick-or-treaters may not remember to look both ways before crossing the street. They may also be hampered by ill-fitting costumes or masks, which is why it's important that drivers are extra vigilant on this night. Keep an eye out for kids and remember that they might be wearing dark-colored costumes. Slow down, especially in residential areas, and be extra careful when pulling into or out of driveways. Put the cell phone down and concentrate on driving. Distractions make it much harder to react to children who may run out into the street unexpectedly.

The required vigilance and attention to detail is much more difficult when alcohol is in the mix. Many adults get into the Halloween fun by attending costume parties and other festivities. Unfortunately, the "spirits" often consumed on Halloween wreak havoc behind the wheel. The DOT reports that two-thirds of all highway fatalities on Halloween are alcohol-related.

Halloween is meant to be good, clean fun for both adults and kids. A stomach ache from too much candy can be dealt with, but a fatal car crash is a catastrophe of nightmare proportions. The good news is that a few simple precautions behind the wheel are all that's necessary to prevent tragedy.